24. The opening paragraph should be your best paragraph, and its first sentence should be your best sentence. If a paper starts badly, the reader will wince and be resigned to a difficult job of fighting with your prose. Conversely, if the beginning flows smoothly, the reader will be hooked and won’t notice occasional lapses in the later parts. Probably the worst way to start is with a sentence of the form “An $x$ is $y$.” For example,

Bad: An important method for internal sorting is quicksort.
Good: Quicksort is an important method for internal sorting, because ...

Bad: A commonly used data structure is the priority queue.
Good: Priority queues are significant components of the data structures needed for many different applications.

25. The normal style rules for English say that commas and periods should be placed inside quotation marks, but other punctuation (like colons, semicolons, question marks, exclamation marks) stay outside the quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation. It is generally best to go along with this illogical convention about commas and periods, because it is so well established, except when you are using quotation marks to describe some text as a specific string of symbols. For example,

Good: Always end your program with the word “end”.

On the other hand, punctuation should always be strictly logical with respect to parentheses and brackets. Put a period inside parentheses if and only if the sentence ending with that period is entirely within the parentheses. The punctuation within parentheses should be correct, independently of the outside context, and the punctuation outside the parentheses should be correct if the parenthesized statement would be removed.

Bad: This is bad, (although intentionally so.)

26. Resist the temptation to use long strings of nouns as adjectives: consider the packet switched data communication network protocol problem.

In general, don’t use jargon unnecessarily. Even specialists in a field get more pleasure from papers that use a nonspecialist’s vocabulary.

Bad: “If $L^+(P, N_0)$ is the set of functions $f: P \rightarrow N_0$ with the property that

$$\exists n_0 \in N_0 \ \forall p \geq n_0 \Rightarrow f(p) = 0$$

then there exists a bijection $N_1 \rightarrow L^+(P, N_0)$ such that if $n \rightarrow f$ then

$$n = \prod_{p \in P} p^{f(p)}$$

Here $P$ is the prime numbers and $N_1 = N_0 \sim \{0\}.”